The Family Times

Funnier Than ChatGPT Hallucinations | December 25, 2023 | United by Blood, Bonded by Sarcasm

Yellowstone Adventure

By Aaron Rugg

This year for a family vacation we went to Yellowstone National Park. We had never seen any of the national parks or monuments or anything like that, so we were excited to go.

We camped at a backwood camping site, Norris Meadows near Ice Lake, about 2 miles off the road. Many of the trees on the way were burned up–victims of a forest fire–so it had a nice Mordor-ish feel to it. The good thing was that it made plenty of firewood.

After we made it to our campsite, we set up our tent and made a fire. We set up our tent by a nice creek that I used to keep my water bottle cold. Fortunately, our tent was waterproof so we didn't need to worry about that.

Then we roasted sausages and made sandwiches, hung up our food in a tree and went to bed.

That was fairly uneventful–aside from it getting really cold in the night, being awakened by Alexander climbing hand over hand across Mom and Dad's air mattress, with the explanation that he was "climbing a tree", hearing Andrew groan all night about hiking during his dreams and getting a cramp in his legs, Attalia waking up in the middle of the night, and Alexander losing his sleeping bag–the night passed without incident.

The next day we drove around and saw things like Old Faithful, Grand Prismatic Springs, etc. and then we came back and explored the area around the meadow.

As it turned out, the "meadow" was actually a swamp, with knee-deep water in some places. We heard some bird calls and once we saw a large bird fly out of a thicket.

Then we went back to our tent and went to bed. The next day we packed up our tent and started for home.

2002

2023

Reliving the Dream

In 2023 Nate and Anna set out on an epic adventure of déjà vu, remarkably similar to the most memorable family vacation ever taken by the Jeff Rugg Family. Sites visited included the badlands, Mt. Rushmore, Devil's Tower, camping in Cody, Wyoming, Yellowstone, Wall Drug, and the Corn Palace. A total of 7 states were crossed (IL, WI, MN, SD, WY, MT, and ID). About 5 photos were reenacted and thankfully hypothermia was avoided this trip because of lessons learned from the past. Read more about the trip on the Travel page T

A

The Family Times

12/25/23

Our House

Merry Christmas from our house to yours!

One of our favorite things we did as a family this Christmas season was to drive through a living nativity at a nearby church.

Luke 2:11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

Matthew 2:2 Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

Undiminished

By Nathan Rugg 12/ 31/ 2022

Another year is almost finished through,
But truly time will never disappear;
My love for you is undiminished too
But grows more deeply with each passing year.

Like trees whose stately limbs lift up the sky
And slowly stretch out further day by day,
So love matures in ways we can't descry,
Yet ever grows in its ow quiet way.

As surely as the seasons always change,
As surely as the sun will part the rain,
So surely did our Union God arrange
And join as one two souls who once were twain.

As Christ who sings sweet songs about his bride,
I trust my love for you won't stay inside.

We hope that you have a great season for rejoicing in the birth of the Savior, Jesus Christ, and looking forward to seeing what the new year brings. May your celebration be sweet with extra sprinkles on top.

Am
The Family Times
12/25/23

Amusement

Grandma Rugg's 90th Birthday Party

By Abigail

One day we went to Grandma Rugg's 90th birthday party, and we played games like cat crimes and once upon a time. And we ate cake, and she opened gifts. We played outside and played tag. There was a photo booth we took a lot of pictures, mostly me and Rylinn. in the family picture you could hardly see me! And we helped clean up, and I took a lot of little pink balloons home.

the end

The whole Family is thankful for Elaine Rugg's life and legacy!

4th of July Fireworks

By Aaron

This year we celebrated the 4th of July at Uncle Ben's house. When we got there, we got little boxes full of Poppers, which are little things like firecrackers that explode when they hit the ground. Or on other people if you throw them hard enough. So we ran around and threw them at each other and at the adults. Someone tried to throw some at Grandpa Jeff and he took their box and hurled the entire thing at them, which must have hurt.

Then we went back into the house and had dinner, and then we went back outside and did some real fireworks. Uncle Ben had a whole bunch of different types of fireworks. Some of them were cars with firework rockets attached to them, and they drove around and ran into things. I think we got them to hit each other once. Nothing exploded, sadly.

Then there were some that shot little helicopter blades into the air and they spun around and landed in the grass. At one point only one of the engines on one of these lit off and it flew wildly and crashed onto the blanket where lots of people were sitting. Fortunately no one got hurt, but Attalia got scared.

Then we shot off some really big ones, which were pretty cool. It was a fun way to end Independence Day.

Anna: What do you think I am, a magician?
Alexander: No, but you are a mom-gician!

Books

Little House

By Abigail

Laura lived with her pa and her ma, also with Mary her older sister and Carrie her little sister . They lived in an little house in the big woods. Mary and Laura played with paper dolls. I liked the story. One thing I did not like is that she wanted to be a boy not a girl.

"Alexander, it is a bad idea to vow to be good for the rest of your life, because then you have no leverage for the rest of your life." – Aaron

Torswin

Fantasy World

Created by Alexander Rugg

Torswin is a marvelous world filled with great creatures, mountains, valleys, forests, prairies, oceans, civilizations and much more.[1] The Island of Lathrock (The small island above Reuel in Barzi) is the meeting place for the Counsel of the Kings, a meeting in which the Kings settle disputes to keep Torswin in order.[2]

Contibi Isle[3]: Contibi is the home of the Kibi[4], the exceedingly short, fun-loving group who just love to eat, and eat, and eat, and eat, and play, and play, and eat. The most interesting thing about Kibi though, is that for ten years old and on, they never seem to age (and they live a good long time too). A one-hundred year Kibi may rather like a twelve year old.

The other thing, though no secret, is that Contibi has by far the most gold mines anywhere in Torswin.[5] You see, originally, Contibi was the home of the Karzans, dwarves that were as tall as Shmarcans. They found Contibi (Year: 403), and discovered the largest gold deposits in the world, hidden on that green and beautiful island, and therefore made huge gold mines. However, before they could enjoy their wealth, they were destroyed by the great dragon Shrack, who attacked them so aggressively that none survived, thus ending the Karzans civilization (Year: 405). 60 years after, the Kibi Jidlon (and his wife, of course) with his large compatriot Redlob the Very Fat Kibi[6] arrived at Contibi with Jidlon's young nephew Tiltin[7]. Tiltin wrote that his uncle killed Shrack with the ship's broken anchor, and claimed the island along with all the gold.

Because of this gold, of course, many wars have been fought over Contibi,[8] putting the Kibi in great danger.

Hisktop: The great continent, home to the empire of Hickort. Hickort was a Defender of Contibi in the Contibi war, and was under the reign of Evanti LegionLord at that time. However, one of the most infamous characters from Hisktop is the Hickortian Duke of Downwater. He lived in a wealthy home in Hickort, and he was known as Portsroy. He was dubbed as a knight and also made a duke in the year 860 at 26 years of age. He then led his first mission to save Mangland (their ally) from Tembelan. After completing his mission, he found that the King of Downmarch[9], Elin Otin, was under attack by Shers. Joram Hultob, son of Gath, King of Shers was pitifully crushing Downmarch. Portsroy then mounted up his army and surprised Tun, the general of Shers, and scattered his men. Elin rewarded Portsroy very handsomely. He gave Portsroy gold, rings, horses, soldiers, and even a new name from Downmarch. (Continued on Books 2)

1 This lost world was discovered by Alexander the Great.
2 See Book 1 of *The Quest for Contibi* by Alexander the Great, where Jodor Westot and Padrock TurnBellow attend the Counsel of the Kings with Jarkin LegionLord and Helis Gongus.
3 Contibi is displayed much bigger on the map than reality for emphasis.
4 See *Nuisances* by Jarkin LegionLord and *Pudgy Little Cheaters* by Sir Edward of Shmarca.
5 See *I want it! I want it!* by The Duke of Downwater.
6 Hence the Redlob Award for the annual champion eater of the village (won by Doky Rankon in 1021, by Tom McBadger in 1022 and 1023, and then by Padrock Turnbellow 1024, 1025, and 1026).
7 Renowned Kibi Author. See his most famous work: *Contibi.*
8 The Contibi War was a world war fought over Contibi in the year 1026. Half of the world wanted to destroy it and take the gold for themselves, and the other half wanted to defend Contibi from this assault. The groups were separated into: Attackers and Defenders.
9 See *The March of Palvid* by Andrew Crimson and Alexander the Great.

Books²

Torswin Continued

He was from then on called The Duke of Downwater, as was his name given by Elin. King Helpholis of Hickort was happy to see Duke Portsroy, or, The Duke of Downwater safely return.

Stirling was also a Defender of Contibi Isle in The Contibi War under the reign of King Endin. However, in the Stirling War, fought in year 870-875, his ancestor, Elrod was ruling over the province. King Helpholis dubbed and made Sir Elrod a duke in 860. Elrod was then given the province of Stirling. However, after The Duke of Downwater rose to power, Elrod and his province wanted nothing to do with Hickort. After Helpholis realized Stirling's attempt to break away he immediately sent The Duke of Downwater to destroy the rebellion. Thus the beginning of this civil war[1]. Now, Hickort is a nation world renowned for it's horses. Especially Hickort's exclusive breed, Alwér, meaning hero in ancient Hickortian language. The Alwér were very fast, sturdy horses, so fast and strong that regular chargers sometimes are faster than 0.5 times the speed of a regular horse. So, Stirling furnished themselves with pikes and spears to defend themselves against the charging cavalry. Helpholis told the Duke of Downwater that every piece of land that he conquered would be given to him. So, lance in hand, The Duke of Downwater set off with his army of 15,000 cavalry. He took the castle of Bondulf, and the surrounding villages. MaKing Bondulf the temporary center for his operation, he then proceeded to carry out his plans to destroy the center city of the rebellion: Elrod's castle. However, his plan ended in utter failure, as his army was met with an ambush of 9,600 spear men from the rear side of his army, halfway between Bondulf and Elrod's castle. After acquiring more men from the King, he rushed his army forward to the seashore where the Castle of Elrod was, this time catching *them* by surprise. The castle was more of a citadel, with 7 walls and towers, a residential area, and a strong hold where Elrod presided. After casting up mounts and setting his army in position to attack, The Duke of Downwater sat back and expected hardly any resistances made from Elrod. He was wrong however, and Elrod sent out a large army of spear-men. The Duke of Downwater charged them straight on, which was his mistake, as his riders were met with the sharp point of a pike. The Duke of Downwater was incredibly startled to see the rebellion pushing his own cavalry back. He retreated his army, and then sent out a decoy band of riders to ride toward the front of the army, while two other large forces surprised them from the flanks. His plan worked, and the army was scattered. Most just dropped their pike and ran for the hills, while others tried to make a weak defense against the oncoming attackers.

Now that Elrod's men were either dead or weaponless and scattered in the hills, he considered surrendering to The Duke of Downwater. Fortunately for him, Peter Williams Peter Williams the merchant from Condro[2] landed on the seashore and found Elrod's weaponless men. After inquiring their business, he gave them spears and pikes. His men thanked him, and assembled themselves for war against The Duke of Downwater's siege camp, using their higher ground to their advantage. Taking captive the guards at his camp (The Duke of Downwater made a swift escape and rode as fast as he could toward Hickort), the army charged forward into the horsemen, giving them hardly enough time to turn their horses around. So the province of Stirling became the country of Stirling, and Hickort now respects Stirling's rights. Downwater's siege camp, using their higher ground to their advantage. Taking captive the guards at his camp (The Duke of Downwater made a swift escape and rode as fast as he could toward Hickort), the army charged forward into the horsemen, giving them hardly enough time to turn their horses around. So the province of Stirling became the country of Stirling, and Hickort now respects Stirling's rights. (Torswin Concluded on Books 3)

1 See Rebellion! by The Duke of Downwater.
2 See The Diary of Peter Williams by Peter Williams.

Red Badge Of Courage

A Classic Literature Review

By Aaron Rugg

- Author: Stephen Crane
- Year Written: 1894-1895
- Nationality or Geographical Area: Union
- Type of Work (Fiction, Biography, Play, etc.): Fiction
- Synopsis: A young soldier leaves home to go fight for the Union in the Civil War and fears that he will run away like a coward. He fights the enemy in one battle and becomes bold and boastful, but during the second battle he flees and fears that he will become a disgrace. Then he starts fleeing his old regiment and hiding among nature, but he eventually joins back up with his old regiment. Afterwards, has two battles of glory with him being the color-bearer, and the book ends ends with him realizing that not all war is glorious.
- Important Elements: The struggle of the main character going from fearing war to loving war.
- Life Application: Not to be enamored with war
- What I most enjoyed about this work: The description of soldier life
- What I least enjoyed about this work: How the story doesn't resolve well

Books³

Torswin Concluded

Now, The Duke of Downwater and King Helpholis both shared a common trait. Greed. After Hickort lost the Stirling war Helpholis sent The Duke of Downwater to find the lost gold of Contibi. He set sail in 878, and after many hardships, he arrived in Contibi in 880. The Duke of Downwater sprang up the night of his arrival and shouted "I claim this island for Hickort!". He and his men treated the Kibi badly, and he spent six more years mining the gold. In 886, Peter Williams the merchant from Condro (also the hero of the Stirling war) crash-landed on Contibi. He had been captured by pirates and he and his crew were able to kill them and take over the pirate ship, but a storm blew them into Contibi. Peter Williams and his crew saw the Duke of Downwater mistreating the Kibi, and dressed themselves for war in the pirates armor. The battle took place not far from the village, and Peter Williams himself shot The Duke of Downwater down, thus ending his terror on Contibi, and bringing the six year "Downwater Period" to an end.

Guzirn: The Guxan League is governed by two consuls. You see, in the year 900, there were two countries instead of Guxan. Guxan and Silvin. Guxan used to be the part of land above the neck The King of Guxan, Blimp, wanted to enlarge his land, and he made his primary target Silvin. He struck first out at the city of Hargum. Hargum was taken easily, as Blimp launched a surprise attack in the night. News made it's way to Jinloaf, King of Silvin, as Blimp went rampaging down the countryside. He sent 2 groups of footmen to cut them off before he came to Hugnob.

After Blimp came to Hargum, he quickly liberated the village. Then he rushed his army to go to Hugnob, because his spies had warned him of the army sent that way. When he came to Hugnob, he found the gates shut and the city prepared for war. He warned them and asked them to surrender. They of course refused, and Blimp set up his army and siege weapons. He was only a day into the siege when the army from King Jinloaf arrived. Blimp marched head on to face him, and the two forces met. Both armies were badly damaged, but Jinloaf came out the better, and Blimp retreated. However, Jinloaf was defeated when Blimp launched a counter not even half an hour later. Now that Blimp had Hargum and Hugnob, he began to make his way toward Hedsuk. However, when he got there, he was hit hard with the best of Jinloaf's soldiers. Jinloaf was very mad at Blimp now, and he sent his full army power against him. Blimp's army was horribly defeated, and Jinloaf chased him and his army all the way back to Guxan. Blimp's garrisons at Hargum and Hugnob tried to resist, but they were overtaken and soon fled. Jinloaf took down some of Guxan's own cities in return. However, in the year 908, Blimp made another sneaky assault on Silvin. He sent a large fleet of galleons full of soldiers ready for battle around Silvin and landed at it's bottom. He then used his force there to destroy Hocheck and the other cities, and then advanced upward, conquering as they went. By the time Jinloaf heard of it, Blimp had already launched another assault from the north again. By the time the two forces had arrived at the capitol, Jinloaf surrendered.

After this however, the formerly Silvin rebelled three times, and all three times lost. They rebelled one more time, and ransacked the castle. Blimp offered to make peace and a new form of government. One consul from Silvin, and another from Guxan. They agreed, and the rebellion was stopped in the year 910, and it is now called the Guxan League.

Thus concludes this installment of the History of the World of Torswin. Stay tuned for the next feature coming in 2024.

Thanks for reading – Alexander Rugg

Adam and His Kin

A Review

By Andrew Rugg

- Author: Ruth Beechick
- Year Written: 1990
- Nationality or Geographical Area: Ancient World
- Type of Work: Historical fiction
- Synopsis:

A work adding details to the history covered in the early chapters of genesis, showing how the events might have happened on a more detailed scale.

The additions are partly fiction, but all derived from some sort of common sense logical explanation based on implications and reasoning about the events covered in the book.

- Important Elements:

The book shows how everyday life might have occurred in the pre-diluvian world and on the ark during the flood.

It also shows some of the struggles the early preachers probably had while preaching the gospel, and probable reasons for why the evildoers did what they did.

- Life Application:

This book shows us that as long as we don't accept details as proven truths in biblical fiction, it is perfectly fine to make a book about it.

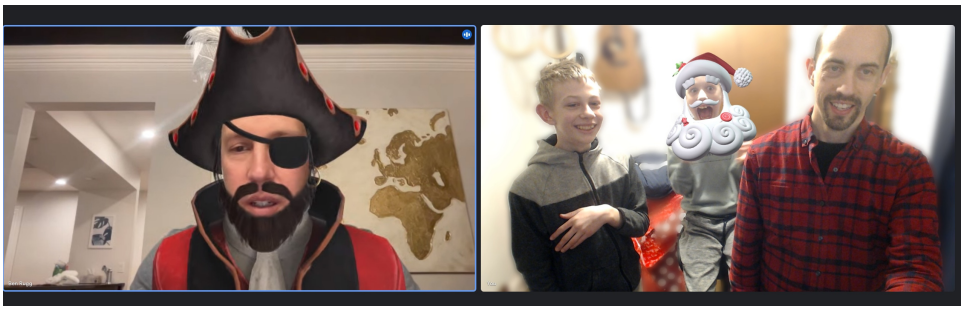
- What I most enjoyed about this work:

How it showed the origins of cults and evil religions, and why idolaters look to the stars.

- What I least enjoyed about this work:

It implied that Adam and Eve stayed a long time in the garden of Eden, however it was most likely shortly after creation week, as Eve would be easier to convince being only a few days old.

Business



hashtag "business meeting"

Matrix Knockdown

By Alexander

A long time ago I made a game called "Matrix Knockdown", and this year, Uncle Ben made a computer version, that had a lot of different sized boards. Then we started making engines that are really hard to beat, and we also started having business meetings. Our Engine is called Behemoth, and Uncle Ben's engine is called Avalanche. Soon, our engines will be too hard, and we'll be able to 3D-print Matrix Knockdown boards.

Piano Recital

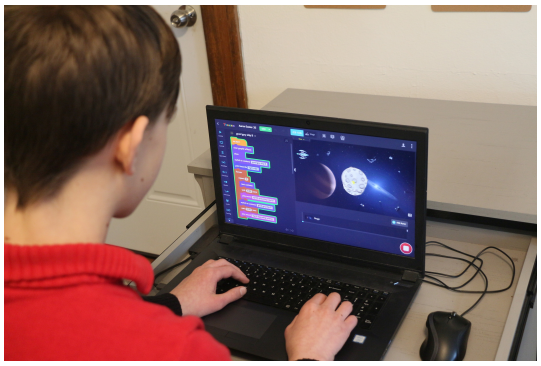
Abigail, Alexander, Andrew, and Aaron all played increasingly difficult piano pieces for Grandma Sharla's Spring Recital, showing marked improvement from last year.

With grandmas, grandpas, and aunts in attendance the Rugg kids had the largest fan-base in the audience as well.

Tynker Interviews

In the beginning of 2023, Aaron and Andrew were interviewed by Tynker for winning their coding cup in 2022. You can read Aaron's and Andrew's interviews online. One thing not mentioned is that they used a large portion of the prize money they earned on a Christmas present for their mom in 2022, demonstrating their kind hearts generous spirit in addition to their coding skills. Nate, who has taught them heart and coding, was also interviewed and his answers appear at the end of both boys interviews.

Andrew made the above illustration as a possible background for Matrix Knockdown using his 3D skills in Blender



CJ
The Family Times
12/25/23

Caleb & Jo

Growing

By Joanna Rugg

Rowan has gone from a baby barely being able to scoot last December to a full-blown running, jumping, and just beginning to talk toddler. She's gotten many inches taller and has grown many more hairs. Rowan went to her first outdoor concert this summer at Ravinia in Highland Park, IL to hear a chamber orchestra. Though some would argue she more thoroughly enjoyed the picnic and folding chair which accompanied the event. We also planted vegetables in our garden for the first time this year! Rowan got to experience baby-sized zucchinis and garlic scapes fresh from the backyard. Meanwhile, we learned what it's like to grow 8 raised beds while caring for a toddler. Overall, we're loving Rowan's mischievous toddler nature. She's been getting into grandparents' unlocked snack drawers, playing with toilet paper, and climbing anything that will stay still long enough for her to try to scale.

Joanna donated her bone marrow to an anonymous cancer patient in need through the Be The Match registry that she signed up for it way back in college..

Ch
The Family Times
12/25/23

Challenge

ChessKid All-Star

By Aaron

When I tried to qualify for the Chesskid All-stars Tournament, I had to play in the Chesskid Monthly Championship first. This tournament had 200+ people in it and had 7 rounds. I was able to win all but one of my games, which placed me in 5th place in the tournament. Fortunately, the person who got first place was cheating, so I moved up to 4th place, which was the minimum that was needed to advance to the next tournament.

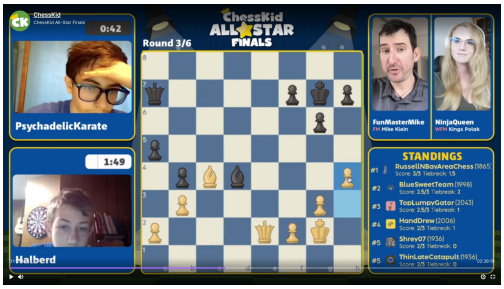
The next tournament was played between 4 players and had 3 rounds. In the first two rounds, one set of two players would play a match against each other consisting of three games. The time for the first three games was 5 minutes per player, plus 1 extra second per move. Whoever had won more games at the end of the three games would advance to the final round. If the score was tied, then the players would play quicker games (3 minutes for the game plus 1 extra second per move) until someone won. That person would advance to the final round.

So when the day of the tournament came, me and two other players logged on to Chesskid. There was no sign of my opponent, so the other two players started playing their match. The winner won quite convincingly and advanced to the final round. Here I was supposed to play a semi-final match to see if I or the other player would qualify to go to the final round, but the other player never showed up, so I advanced straight to the final round. This was also 3 games with 5 minutes and 1 extra second per move, but the winner would advance to the Chesskid All-stars tournament.So we started off, and he got White because he scored slightly higher on tiebreaks than I did. I got a winning position out of the opening, but then I messed it up and we drew the game.

Then I got White and blundered a queen in the middlegame, and then I lost. At this point he had won 1 game and I had won none, and this was the last game, so if we drew, he advanced to the All-star tournament. I had Black again, and this time he played a different opening. We both were moving way too fast because of nerves and we played a bunch of sub-optimal moves. Eventually I got into a position that at the time I thought was close to losing (apparently it was still equal, but I didn't know that at the time) and I needed to win to force a tiebreak match… so I made a checkmate threat and hoped he would keep moving too quickly like we had been doing throughout the entire match… and it worked. He missed it and I won. Then we had a tiebreak game. If I won, I would advance, if he won, he would advance, and if we drew again, we would play another game. I got White again this time and played the same opening I had last time minus the queen trap (as the live commentator was quick to point out) and got a position that was slightly drawish, but I had more active pieces and kept pushing. It was a fairly fast game and for most of the game I had one minute on my clock and he had 15 seconds on his clock. (We could maintain these times because every time we made a move, we gained 1 second.) I was winning about halfway through the game but it took a long time to convert the game and I made a blunder for a second but he had to move quickly and he didn't notice it.

That 3-minute game lasted 9 minutes.

Eventually I won and advanced, and then we went to Bible study and then to Culver's to get ice cream.



Watch Aaron play as Halberd against PsychadelicKarate around minute 1:10

After all 6 round Aaron wound up with 3/6 for wins. Very solid score for playing in the All-Star Finals!

In the game against PsychadelicKarate FunMasterMike Mentions Aaron holding him to a draw on his show. Watch Aaron play as halberd at 1:21;53

Comics

Moses's Golden Shake!

Limited Edition! Find at local McSinai!

Ingredients: Smoked, natural, strawed through water, Pure gold,

Warning! Allergy Facts:

This product may contain unground fragments of Israelite Idols

For more information on this particular product, go to: www.McSinai.com/Exodus 32:20

Mario Wants you!

Mario Bros Plumbing Co. is hiring!

Requirements:

Be able to jump 6 times your height
Grow twice your size after eating mushrooms
Break bricks with head
Find vast stores of wealth within pipes

Basic plumbing skills not required.

Why dragons never get their wishes

The spirit of Christmas gone horribly wrong

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The Family Times
12/25/23

Dear You

Dear Nelsy

By Alexander

There's a hole in my bucket, dear Nelsy, dear Nelsy,
There's a hole in my bucket, dear Nelsy, a hole.
Then mend it, Tongarango, Tongarango, Tongarango,
Then mend it, Tongarango, Tongarango, mend it.
With what shall I mend it, dear Nelsy, dear Nelsy?
With what shall I mend it, dear Nelsy, with what?
With straw, Tongarango, Tongarango, Tongarango,
With straw, Tongarango, Tongarango, with straw.
The straw is too long, dear Nelsy, dear Nelsy,
The straw is too long, dear Nelsy, too long.
Then cut it, Tongarango, Tongarango, Tongarango,
Then cut it, Tongarango, Tongarango, cut it.
With what shall I cut it, dear Nelsy, dear Nelsy?
With what shall I cut it, dear Nelsy, with what?
With a knife, Tongarango, Tongarango, Tongarango,
With a knife, Tongarango, Tongarango, a knife.
The knife is too dull, dear Nelsy, dear Nelsy,
The knife is too dull, dear Nelsy, too dull.
Then sharpen it, Tongarango, Tongarango, Tongarango,
Then sharpen it, Tongarango, Tongarango, sharpen it.
With what shall I sharpen it, dear Nelsy, dear Nelsy?
With what shall I sharpen it, dear Nelsy, with what?
With a stone, Tongarango, Tongarango, Tongarango,
With a stone, Tongarango, Tongarango, a stone.
The stone is too dry, dear Nelsy, dear Nelsy,
The stone is too dry, dear Nelsy, too dry.
Then wet it, Tongarango, Tongarango, Tongarango,
Then wet it, Tongarango, Tongarango, wet it.
With what shall I wet it, dear Nelsy, dear Nelsy?
With what shall I wet it, dear Nelsy, with what?
With water, Tongarango, Tongarango, Tongarango,
With water, Tongarango, Tongarango, with water.
The toilet is clogged, dear Nelsy, dear Nelsy,
The toilet is clogged, dear Nelsy, is clogged.
Then plunge it, Tongarango, Tongarango, Tongarango,
Then plunge it, Tongarango, Tongarango, plunge it.
There's a hole in the plunger, dear Nelsy, dear Nelsy,
There's a hole in plunger, dear Nelsy, a hole.
Then mend it, Tongarango, Tongarango, Tongarango,
Then mend it, Tongarango, Tongarango, mend it.
With what shall I mend it, dear Nelsy, dear Nelsy?
With what shall I mend it, dear Nelsy, with what?
With straw, Tongarango, Tongarango, Tongarango,
With straw, Tongarango, Tongarango, with straw.
There's bubbles in the toilet, dear Nelsy, dear Nelsy,
There's bubbles in the toilet, dear Nelsy, there's bubbles.
Buy a new one, Tongarango, Tongarango, Tongarango,
Buy a new one, Tongarango, Tongarango, buy one.
Where shall I buy it, dear Nelsy, dear Nelsy,
Where shall I buy it, dear Nelsy, where?
A store, Tongarango, Tongarango, Tongarango,
A store, Tongarango, Tongarango, a store.

Which store shall I buy it in, dear Nelsy, dear Nelsy,
Which store shall I buy it in, dear Nelsy, which?
The nearest, Tongarango, Tongarango, Tongarango,
The nearest, Tongarango, Tongarango, the nearest.
How do I know, dear Nelsy, dear Nelsy,
How do I know, dear Nelsy, How?
Try walking, Tongarango, Tongarango, Tongarango,
Try walking, Tongarango, Tongarango, walk.
How shall I walk, dear Nelsy, dear Nelsy,
How shall I walk, dear Nelsy, How?
Your feet, Tongarango, Tongarango, Tongarango,
Your feet, Tongarango, Tongarango, your feet.
Where are my feet, dear Nelsy, dear Nelsy,
Where are my feet, dear Nelsy, where?
Look here, Tongarango, Tongarango, Tongarango,
Look here, Tongarango, Tongarango, here.
I don't have my eyes, dear Nelsy, dear Nelsy,
I don't have my eyes, dear Nelsy, I don't.
Put in the bucket, Tongarango, Tongarango, Tongarango
Put in the bucket, Tongarango, Tongarango, put in.
There's a hole in my bucket, dear Nelsy, dear Nelsy,
There's a hole in my bucket, dear Nelsy, a hole.

Seriously Silly Sayings Subsequently Saved

- Praying for her oatmeal one day…
  Thank you God for mom and dad going to Aldi.
  –Attalia
- "Why do hairdos have to hurt so much?" –Abigail
- "I have noticed the older people are, the more things they have on their fridge." – Alexander
- It's just naturally easier for Aaron to memorize things word for word. You are doing great learning biology! And a year and a half younger than him! "I probably just got the wrong alleles..." –Andrew (Biology jokes? Self deprecation? Excuses?)
- "It shouldn't take a real injury to get you to admit defeat!"
  –Aaron sword playing with a younger brother

Entertainment

Being Queen

By Abigail

On the date of january4th we went to medieval times and they were giving out flowers and I wanted to get one but I did not. So me and dad went down and dad asked the knight for one and he took a flower for me.

When they were giving out Queen of the tournaments sash the knight took the red one and gave it right to me and man took a picture of me with it!!! And mom said it was because I asked for a flower and my daddy got me one.

Medieval Times

By Andrew

One of our Christmas presents from last year was a trip to Medieval Times. We were really excited. We hadn't gone there since before Abigail was born, so we were really glad.

We got assigned to the red knight :) & we got the second row up. While we were eating, they had Spanish horses perform fancy walks & things like that. The second horse I thought was going out of control and they weren't trying to make him perform what he was doing. The next horse performed "The Victor's March" and that looked a lot cooler. The Queen sent her royal horse before the crowd too and Rodrigo Diaz (El Cid) sent her a gift of a performing horse too. When the queen's Chancellor heard about a gift he thought it was going to be oranges, and even after the dragon knight (he was kind of like the tournament arbiter) told him that it was a horse he kept going on about the oranges until the dragon knight eventually said "Will you STOP with the ORANGES!". (But Attalia kept on asking for oranges for the rest of the evening.) The horses also bowed before the Queen.

After the horses performed, they had a falconer make a falcon whiz over the crowd. The Falcon was certainly my favorite of all the performing animals. (Okay, yeah, I liked the falconer a lot too.)

After all the animals performed, the knights charged out and did games where they charged their lances through rings and tried to get them to stay on and stabbed their lances into a target.

Then the lancing part began. The Black and White knight dealt the Red and Yellow knight a mighty blow while lancing and nearly killed him on foot. He wanted to kill him but he didn't have permission to do that and even though when the Queen asked the crowd whether or not to continue in To-The-Death combat & the crowd said yes (I didn't, but the rest of the crowd did) the Queen commanded that the Red and Yellow Knight should not be killed.

Then the lancing continued except with To-The-Death combat. The Red knight destroyed the green knight but then got vengeful and wanted to kill the blue knight for "some past insult". The Blue knight slew him. The Red and Yellow Knight (who had healed) defeated another knight, but then the Black and White knight charged in and nearly got the Red and yellow Knight's head with his lance, but the Red and Yellow knight chopped the end off just in time. The Black and White knight (who was at the same time defying the queen) challenged the recovered Red and Yellow knight in To-The-Death combat. The Red and Yellow Knight was killed, but then the Blue Knight came in (at the request of the Queen) and killed the Black and White Knight.

Food & Dining

Apple Picking Adventure

By Andrew

One day, we went apple picking with Uncle Ben at a farm in Wisconsin. Uncle Ben said he thought Jonathon was the best apple ever, but then, he later thought he might have been talking about Ruby Mac or maybe even Royal Courtland. so we stopped by some of those trees after picking some Jonathan ones too.

On the way back, Uncle Ben bought us some Apple Cider Donuts, and took us to an event where we got a free pumpkin! The donuts were really good, although I'm not sure why they're called apple cider donuts.

When we got to his house, we took one apple of each kind, Jonathan, Ruby Mac, & Courtland, and cut them into slices to see which one was the best. The winner was... Jonathan after all!

After that, we started up chat GPT and created The Lost Artifact Quest, a heroic tale about a man named Alden Thorne, who was as strong as a Minotaur, (and twice as handsome) as well as two rogue-like characters named Falean and Lior. Lior was very impulsive, and kept licking various items, as well as poke the fourth character, Illyerio, in the third eye. Aside from having three eyes, Illyerio had magical orbs spinning around him, extremely long fingers, and hovered above the ground. The final character was a dwarf named Borrik. Together, equipped with our various abilities, (and the power of Gogo's theme) we set out on our quest to obtain the amulet of time. Although our band may seem a little unusual together, "Sometimes all you need is a little absurbity."

Adopted Uncles and Culvers

By Alexander

Well, when we came back from China, we first lived at Grandma Mary and Grandpa Jeff's house, and one of their neighbors was a grandpa named Mr. Gerald. He gave us a lot of candy and treats, until we moved away. Then, we went to a church were we found another nice grandpa named Mr. Rex. Later, he switched churches with another church nearby us. Then, Grandma Mary and Grandpa Jeff's neighbor got sick and moved to Wisconsin. The two met at our Proclaim Day, and really liked each other because both served in the marines and were brought up on a farm. Then Mr. Gerald started going to the same church nearby us, and usually when we go there, they both take us out to lunch at Culvers, and we call them Candyman Jerry and Uncle Rex and they spoil us a lot. We have a lot of fun hearing their stories.

(I always order the Culver's Double Bacon Deluxe Basket Meal. –Alexander)

"Aww, parents never let kids clean out things they want to like the fridge." – Alexander
Meaning let you eat all the food?
"Yes!" – Alexander

Food & Dining²

Chicken Harvest

By Alexander

Well, we went to our friends house to harvest about 3 turkeys and 50 chickens. Here's the process:

1) Take chicken out of cage
2) Stick chicken head firmly between two boards
3) Pick up knife
4) Chop off chicken head
5) Stick chicken body in the feather plucker
6) Take plucked chicken body out of feather plucker
7) Stick chicken body on table
8) Pull off all the extra feathers and little hairs
9) Cut and pull out guts and non tasty insides and intestines
10) Wrap finished chicken (Optional):
11) Give intestines to cats

Repeat this process for the rest of the birds

Pumpkin family

By Abigail

For Thanksgiving we bought pumpkins from our friends and painted faces on them. Alexander told Aaron to remember to keep it simple. Aaron made a smile and eyes and made a line and ears and we put them outside.

Thanksgiving

By Abigail

On Thanksgiving day we went to Grandma Rugg's house. We had food. We played games and had dessert. And we got pictures and in them they made our hair pink! And we had to go.

Corn Harvest

By Andrew

We have friends who are farmers, & they had a lot of corn to harvest, so we decided to help them. Even Attalia came: she went back and forth carrying loads of corn for Mom and others.

Corn ears have a rather full tassel of hair-like stuff when they are ripe, and the trick is to find one that looks like that, and then pull it down and twist it. That should be able to get it off of the stalk. But picking corn is harder than it sounds, because it can be hard to tell if their tassel is long enough, and since the outside of the ears are the same color as the stalk, it's really easy to miss some. For a long time, it felt like we were almost done, but then we kept finding more corn.

After we finished, they gave us a lot of corn for helping, and Mom stopped by Aldi and bought pizza for lunch as a reward..

Fun
The Family Times
12/25/23

Family Fun

Friends Sleepover

By Alexander

Well, the Sturks had a family emergency, so Elijah and Isaac got to have a sleepover with us. It happened at Easter, so we made them an egg hunt. We played in our tent we had set up, and then we watched Samson, but we had to stop to go to bed. The next day we ate breakfast and played. We finished Samson, and Isaac, Abigail and I biked to the park.

Puzzles

By Alexander

Well, our family likes to do puzzles. One of my favorite was a horseshoe puzzle Dad got for the 4th of July. Two metal horseshoes are chained together with a metal ring in the middle. If you twist and fold the horseshoes together, you can get it into a position where you can pull the metal ring off. I often bring it to parties to see if anyone can solve it. This Christmas I got quite a few brain teasers and a vortex puzzle, so I'll have a long fun time doing puzzles. We got a lot of exit games, and we beat one of them. We had to look all over the pictures and box cover to find clues to figure out the riddles.

Double the Fun Sleepover

by Alexander

Well you see, Grandma Sharla was meeting a friend in Rochelle, and so she decided to see us and maybe do a sleepover. The thing was, Grandma Sharla was going up to Grandma Lorna's on Sunday, so they got stuck with us for two nights.

We were planning to go to a park with tanks called Canteeny but the weather was bad so we didn't end up going. So we stayed inside, and made a Star Wars game, and went to church to play dodge-ball on Saturday. We even went to an all-you-can-eat-bafe for dinner.

On Sunday, we went to church, and after that another girl wanted to play dodge-ball again, so we got to play it on Saturday and Sunday.

I still think the real reason for 2 nights was that they were trying to get back at Grandma Mary and Grandpa Jeff.

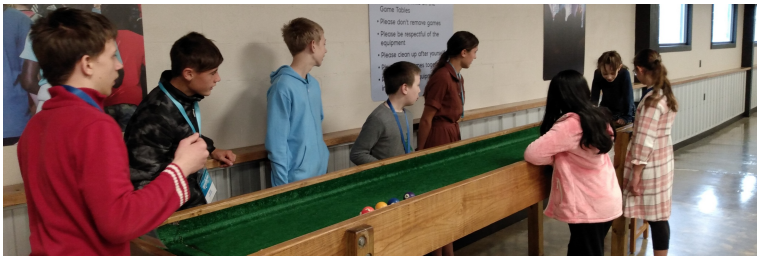
Tea Parties

By Abigail

Attalia was giving tea party's to our stuffed animals and Flam joined some too. He and Sam tried to get the yummiest things. Sometimes pooh was there and most of the time Sam. The food sometimes cake but sometimes corn. Flam would like cake more then corn.

G
The Family Times
12/25/23

Games



Bible Bee Carpet-ball

by Alexander

Bible Bee was especially fun this year (despite the fact that I didn't do good), because Ridgecrest conference center had a game room with pool tables, ping pong tables, carpet-ball tables and other things. Our favorite was the carpet-ball, where you set up 5 pool balls on your end of the long carpeted table, and put them in your formation in front of your gutter. You then proceed to alternate throwing the white pool ball to knock the other person's balls into their gutter. Same for the person on the other end of the table. If your opponent knocks all your balls down, you still can win by knocking all his balls down, not missing one throw and then you go into

tie breaks. In the first round of tie-breaks, you and your opponent puts two balls down, and try to knock those in. If you tie again (same tying procedure) then you both put down three. If you tie again, you go back to five. five, two, three, and then five again.

I won a lot of games but lost a few. Usually, there was a line for each side of the table. If one person on the other side wins, your line moves, and the person who was just beaten goes to the back of a line. But if the person in front of you is playing, and he wins the game, the other line moves, but yours just sits there until he loses.

Bible Bee study game

By Alexander

Well, with the NBBC convention coming up, we decided to have a study party with some of our friends who were also doing Bible Bee. We prepared a game with the six following question card decks: Crossrefrences (Yellow), Greek (Green), Historical Context (Blue), Memory Passage Questions (Magenta), Random Access (Orange), and Study Passage Content (Red). We also made a board with a trail of Paul's journey from Corinth to Rome (The end of Paul's third journey to his imprisonment). The game was kind of like Candy-Land, except when you drew the

color, you had to answer that color question.

When you pulled a color and answered the question correctly that was on the other side of one of the various giant purple blocks, you had to recite a passage to go through. If you recited the passage with three or less mistakes, you moved on to the color you picked. If not, you stayed at the giant purple block until your next turn, when you picked another card, answer it, and recite another passage (you may also request a passage that you had messed up before to try that passage again). The goal of the game was to get to Rome before all the other players. If you got to Rome, you got to fight in the Roman Colosseum, where you recited a larger passage than normal to win.

Although we didn't finish the game at the party, my team got the farthest along the trail before everyone left.

Lifestyle

Honey and Bone Church

Come one come all! Join our services we might not have them every week. We might not have them every month, but when we do they are good! Pastor Flam says, I hope you have a merry Christmas and a happy new year! Pastor Pooh says,deck the halls with bowls of jolly *fa la la la la la la la la*.

Trampoline Park

By Aaron

When we went on a sleepover with Grandma Mary and Grandpa Jeff, they took us to Altitude Trampoline Park. They had a bunch of stuff over there, including a climbing wall, a high dive, and a zip line. My favorite things were probably the Extreme Dodgeball arena and the Wipe Out place where there was a big tube swinging around that you had to jump over. There was also a balance beam where you got foam lances and tried to knock the other person off the beam. It was fun to fight against Andrew on that. After we finished jumping, we went and got Chick-Fil-A for lunch.

Epic Sleepover Adventure

By Andrew Rugg

This year, we got to do a two day sleepover at Grandma Mary and Grandpa Jeff's house. We drove there on grandpa Jeff's birthday. I 3D printed him two Greener View coasters and Aaron and Alexander made him the game Birds VS Squirrels, where the birds are competing for the most birdseed against the squirrels.

When we woke up the next day, Grandma Mary cooked us a big breakfast with sausages, waffles and pancakes. At ten o'clock we left for the Altitude trampoline park, and had lunch at Chick'fil'a. (Abigail spilled her milkshake all over me and her, earning her the title Accidental Abigail for the weekend.)

When we came back, we made valentines for Mom and Dad and Attalia, and watched Helen Keller: Miracle Worker on Grandpa Jeff's computer.

We then went to Nine'ers to have dinner with Great Grandma Rugg, Aunt Dana, Gracie, & Katie. Unfortunately, I had eaten so much before, I had to leave half of my bacon burger. I did eat the fries though.

We came back to have another Grandpa Jeff (& others) birthday party with Great Grandma Rugg, Aunt Dana, Gracie, & Katie, but also Uncle Mark, Aunt Jodi, & Jason, who joined us at Grandpa Jeff's house. There was an ice cream cake with red dye that left really good stains on your hands, new Oreo flavored cupcakes, and Grandpa Jeff was given a white chocolate smaller cake, though there was some dispute on what white chocolate was, & whether or not he had liked cupcakes in the past made of the same flavor.

After that everyone went home, and we played Scrabble with Grandpa Jeff. Although I do not know who won, it was most likely Aaron. The most I ever gained in a word was 25 points for A1X8, with the X on a triple letter score. Aaron scored around 27 points, but how he did it I forget.

The next morning Grandpa Jeff put out cereal boxes, 2 big danishes, raisins, and blueberries for breakfast. We soon went to church, where we got everything ready before the sermon, and opened the doors for people.

After the sermon and talking to friends, we went back home to lunch for a make-your-own-sandwich lunch. Then Grandpa Jeff showed us videos of squirrel ninja courses, where to get to the bird feeder or seeds the squirrels had to do all go through all sorts of mazes, long jumps, diversions, & the like. And every time, the squirrels were able to get to the birdseed. Then we packed up and went back home. The end.

Lifestyle²

Mouse Adventure

Well, we were on the Epic Sleepover Adventure, when Abigail saw a black dot zooming around on the stairs. Then Grandpa Jeff came down, and stepped on it. While he was trying to get it, we were all calling for the cat. Sugar (the cat) jumped out of our arms… and hid under the bed.
YOU GOT TO LOVE SUGAR!

Ninja-Bread

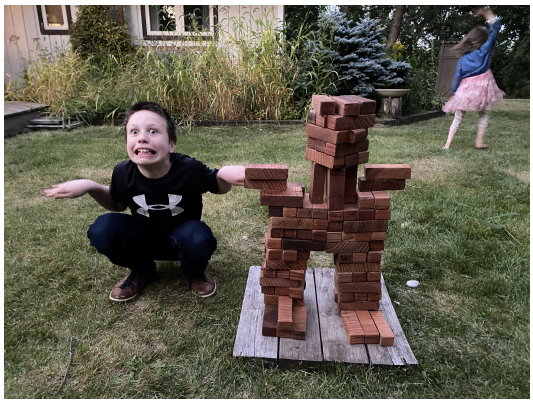
By Alexander

The Sturks came over one day to play, and Mom had planned to decorate ninja-bread men. When Mom had finished the batter, I grated the ginger to put in it. When they came we played a lot of Perfect Dark, which is a shoot-them-up video game, Super Mario Cart 64 (Which Uncle Bob had borrowed and gave it back then), and NFL Blitz, which is a football game. Soon it was time to decorate the Ninja-bread. Unfortunately for me, I could figure out how to draw faces and intricate things on mine, so I just covered it totally in frosting.

Labor Day

By Alexander

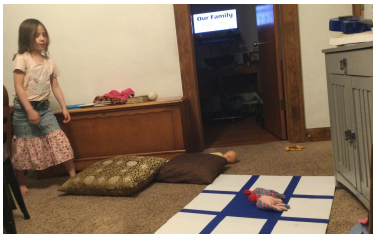
For Labor Day we went to Uncle Caleb's house. We gave him his birthday present we made using a Chat-bot for the story and Stable-Diffusion for the cover. It was about Uncle Caleb fighting a giant prairie dog in the Roman Colosseum. Then we made incredibly and excessive weird photos with strange fish eye, mirror, warp effects, etc. Dad also played punch-out and Super Smash bros., although Aunt Liz won that fight. We also tried to play Super Mario bros. 1 on the TV, which didn't work so well for some reason. Grandpa Jeff also brought some wild grapes he grew. Those were actually pretty good. During dinner, we helped Attalia put on her "I'm a big sister shirt" and showed it to everybody. Nobody really caught on that fast (except Aunt Joanna who was giving other people a chance to discover it on their own), so I started asking people to read it out loud. Afterwards everyone helped construct a beautiful wooden model of myself (with stubby arms and horrible proportions) using Jenga blocks.



American Girl Projects

By Abigail

For my birthday Grandma Sharla and Grandpa John gave me crafts. I made a lot so far even though some fell apart I made the star twirler, the parasoot, and the handshake game. The End.



NM
The Family Times
12/25/23

Nathaniel & Mary

Nathaniel inspiring a peaceful and jocular work environment

2023

By Nathaniel Fritz

Nathaniel and Mary enjoyed another wonderful year together in Columbia, Missouri in 2023.

Nathaniel has made it to seven and a half years working at Veterans United Home Loans – he thinks it's because his co-workers appreciate the mauve t-shirt he wears on Mondays (Mauve Monday, if you will).

Mary has worked at the Bluffs nursing home for six years now – the last year and a half, she's also cared for her mom at that same nursing home and has been a wonderful job continuing for her and the other residents of the home.

Their two dogs, Penny and Kermit, do their best to scare off any potential new friends with their personalities and/or behaviors but still manage to be extremely lovable anyway.

In 2023, Nathaniel and Mary got to travel to Arkansas to see Dave Matthews Band and to Wausau, WI for Grandma Lorna's 90th birthday celebration – Grandma's birthday party was a little wilder than the concert, but they still had a great time at both.

2024 will mark their tenth wedding anniversary and they plan to renew their vows in August – they would think about including Penny and Kermit in the vow renewal but know in their hearts Kermit's barking would make that impossible.

Marathon Park

By Andrew Rugg

The day of Great Grandma Lorna's 90th birthday, we also went to Marathon park, which was near Grandma Lorna's house. Mom and Uncle Nathaniel used to play there as kids, so Uncle Nathaniel & Aunt Mary went with us. It had the greatest play area for bigger kids I had ever seen, with a multi-story slide, huge spider-web style ladders, swings, and a huge rock wall. Me and Attalia had a lot of fun having her go down the slide and me following immediately after.

That little Alexander was so cute, whatever happened to him.
"He probably grew up to be a stand up comedy." -- Alexander

Outdoors

The Grand Egg Hunt

By Abigail

The war raged between man and-i mean Ahem, once upon a time there was a war between man and egg the family came and said that there was eggs to be found. they found them inside and outside and they also found canned dee outside too and they also had a good time. The end

Kubb

By Alexander

Well, we wanted to play a game that was like bowling with our friend, Diana, because she had played it recently, but she didn't want to play. So we just played against each other. I almost lost many times, but in the end…

I won!

Aaron says, "Hooray for pumpkin chili. As long as you eat it up before I visit again."

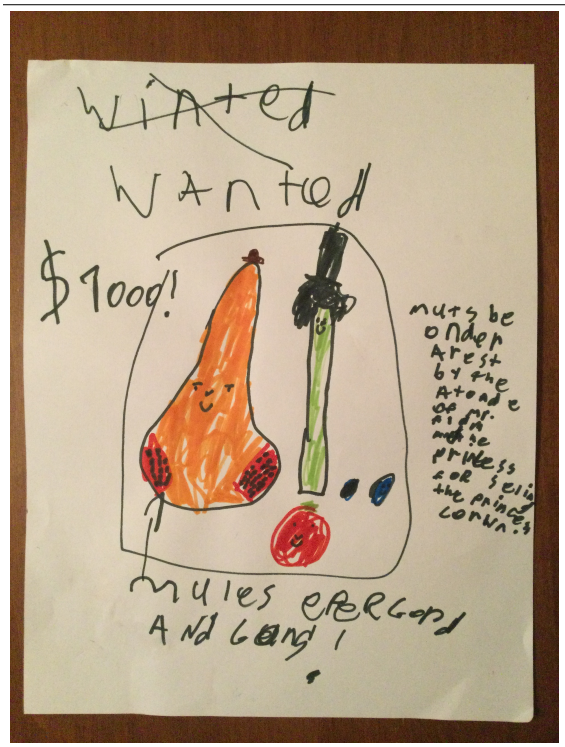
Japanese Garden and Butterfly Exhibit at the Nicolas Conservatory in Rockford, IL

By Abigail

One day we went to a picnic with grandma Mary and grandpa Jeff. then we went to a butterfly place And there was swans by the place. there was a gift shop and I got a light up butterfly. Then we had to watch a video about butterfly's then we did butterfly crafts then we went by the butterfly cage and we went inside it with a butterfly sucker thing and a butterfly got out of the cage, with Aaron's help they got it back. then we went out and looked at the plants. And at the gardens there were pretty plants and things that the Japanese used and some houses and we went home and played before dinner the end.

Pb
The Family Times
12/25/23

Police Blotter



Wanted

By Abigail

Once upon a time there were some vegetables and one day they commited a crime they sole the princess crown the leader of the gang was musless Emperorgourd the co. leader was mr. Baldene a celery stick and now for the rest of the gang there was Toey the tomato she was a girl and then there was Bluey a blueberry one night they went in and took the crown and they went away singing all hale the king Emperogurd he is our king day and night.now they must be under arest and the reward is $7000 one day one man said he had got them and the corwn the end

Don't you want to sleep so you can grow?
No, no, no. – Attalia

You want to stay short?
Yeah! – Attalia

Police Diamonds

The Return from Yellowstone Adventure

By Abigail, Aaron, Nate, Anna, Andrew Alexanerr, Abigail, Aaron, etc.

Once, upon a bison, there gloated a bear wrestler, named Byron Genoa eating berries happily while whistling Dixie to find Hoffman House, who wanted Chamberlain Sinclair dead or inebriated for stealing Madison's toadstools on the last Festival of Diapers, which were actually valued as collectibles; but suddenly Police Diamonds fell through hairy toads, making Chamberlain Sinclair chortle loudly, articulating fireworks Pet Rock Morty saw yesterday, while wombats tried to attack Police Diamond's mother, and trying diapers on Byron Genoa's dog's master, who flushing red, Cheeks exclaimed "Horesefeathers! Madison cat fireballs at me" loquaciously.

The End

Wanted! For Being a Ham!

Armed and Dangerous

Who is that masked baby?

"But in the real Medieval Times, the fights are staged, so the knights can cry in advance!" – Alexander

S
The Family Times
12/25/23

Special Moments

Abigail's Birthday

By Abigail Rugg

One day we went to hobby-lobby and got some things for my birthday party. my much older-well maybe not- well she's maybe is a teenager i do not know but she,s older then me definitely well her birthday was soon after mine. we got a lot of clay for her. we saw a giant balloon we got that it was big and pink. it was my golden birthday this year. soon it was my birthday i woke up to a good morning the big balloon was on a light in the dining room and there were balloons on the ceiling. we had blueberry muffins for breakfast. i read a psalm. more and more woke up we read family bible reading. i got a dress mom let me pick out , a lot of callo critters form the brothers, rose perfume, a little American doll kit the book about kit one of the most wonderful of all real golden necklace. later we had cake and ice cream that was the of day. The day after most of the family came over here for me and Kinley. We opened presents. Mom made me and Kinley special cupcakes, mine had pink frosting and Kinley had blue. A while later we had a tea party with some of my friends. Some did not come but most did. Two sisters somehow had known wen my birthday was they got me stuffed animals and a card.

Andrew's Birthday

By Andrew

My birthday this year was really great. I had cinnamon rolls for breakfast, (like usual), subway for lunch, (like unusual) and chicken drumsticks for dinner. (like usual). In the afternoon, the grandparents arrived for a birthday party. Grandma Sharla & Grandpa John gave me a swiss army knife, Mom & Dad gave me several books and 3D assets from the Unreal Engine Marketplace, and Grandma Mary & Grandpa Jeff gave me a book that I had really wanted, a disco ball, and also a lot of birthday cash. Aaron and Alexander led me on a really long treasure hunt with really obscure clues, (I didn't know that one of the weapons for the video game character that Alexander had on his desk was called a "Blossom") and at the end of it was an SNES Mini! The SNES Mini was a platform for playing several Super Nintendo games that came with the Mini system, like Super Mario RPG, The Secret of Mana, and the never released StarFox 2!

Attalia's Birthday

By Mom

Attalia turned 2 this year and was very excited about her birthday. She woke up to a lot of yellow balloons and had a great day celebrating with her family. The next day her grandparents came for a second party and everyone spoiled her with Winnie the Pooh presents, one of her current favorites.

Alexander's Birthday

By Alexander

When I woke up, the house was decorated in green. My second surprise was that, when Andrew turned on the music machine, it started playing music from Final Fantasy III. After everyone woke up, we went to Flow Trampoline Park, where I found I could do a lot of flips and things off of a trampoline into a air mattress-like thing. When we got home, I think we ate macaroni and cheese for lunch, and afterward, Dad and Andrew gave me a cardboard figure of the ninja from Final Fantasy III named Shadow. I also got some paper figures from Abigail. For dinner we ordered Domino's pizza, and the grandparents came over. They gave me a ninja weapon pack, a ninja costume, and Mom and Dad gave me an air/acting-mattress and a ninja course.

Special Moments

Aaron's Birthday

By Aaron

This year I didn't want to do a lot for my birthday. We had just come back from our huge Yellowstone trip and I worked hard to finish Calculus right before I turned 14. So for my birthday I slept in and ate macaroni and cheese, and then my brothers did the dishes while I went down and looked at the "Happy Birthday" post some of my Bible Bee friends made for me, which ended up turning into a long discussion about various random topics. Then Dad Alexander and Andrew got water guns for a present for me, so we played with those for a while. Then we had dinner and cake and I got presents, which were mostly books.

Proclaim Day

By Andrew

On proclaim day this year, we had significantly more Bible Bee participants than last year. (Last year was just the three of us.) Our Grandparents and many other people came to watch us recite. Elijah Sturk played I Must Tell Jesus on the violin, and Alexander and Dad played *I Am Resolved* on the guitar.

We each recited two bible bee passages from the Summer Study, and I also recited a longer passage from the National passages. After that, Dad awarded everyone who had completed the summer study medals that we had bought earlier.

Grandpa John's Birthday

By Aaron

This year for Grandpa John's birthday we went to a restaurant called the Fireside Grille. It was one of the fanciest restaurants I've ever been in. Attalia got a "kids meal", a grilled cheese sandwich and fries, but the plate was about twice as large as her head and half of it was filled with the sandwich and the other half was filled with the fries. Alexander and me ordered two portions of pork, which came with soup and fries as well. They gave us a choice between two types of soup: Cream of Onion or Asparagus. We chose Cream of Onion and we later found out that the Cream of Onion soup was a lot bigger than the asparagus soup. Then we went back to Grandpa John's house to celebrate his birthday. I gave him a plaque (that he had ordered) saying "LOVE AND ADULATION" and then all our signatures underneath. We ordered pizza, and Grandma Sharla made two pans of four-layer-delight, but we only ended eating one because everyone else was too full from the giant lunch at the Fireside Grille and the pizza.

This year it was a double celebration to be celebrating Grandpa John turning 65 and completing chemo with his lymphoma officially declared in remission. We hope to have him with us for another 65 years.

Sports

Chicago Open

By Aaron

This year I participated in the Chicago Open, which was held in the Westin Hotel. I participated in the Under 1300 section, which means you're not allowed to play if your official rating is over 1300. Of course, this really didn't matter since probably 90% of the people there did not have accurate ratings, myself included. Pity on the poor adults who had accurate ratings. The tournament lasted 7 rounds and all had time controls of over 1 hour per player. (Rounds 3 to 7 were slightly longer than the previous rounds, but rounds 1 and 2 still gave both players more than an hour to play.)

In the first round, I had White against an adult, so I was feeling pretty confident. I had a strange moment on the second move of the game where I thought my opponent played a different move than he did, but it led into a relatively simple position that was not difficult to navigate through at all, and I ended up winning.

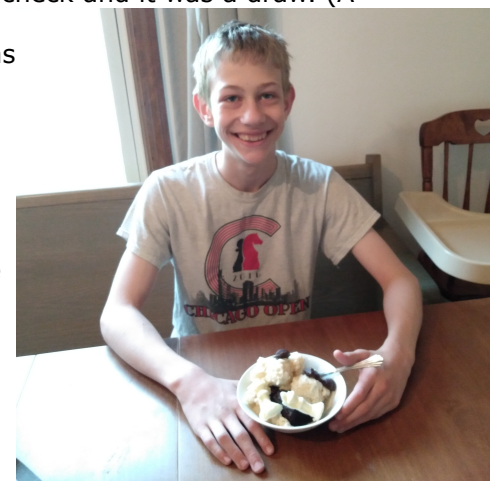
In the second round, I had Black against another adult, so I was still feeling pretty confident, especially when he blundered a pawn within the first 6 moves of the game. I won that one too.

In the third round, the time increased. We now had an hour and 30 minutes to play the first 40 moves of the game, and after move 40 we got an extra hour. These games could be quite a bit longer than the other games. I played another adult as white in this round. I felt slightly happy about that, but he looked very confident himself and he, of course, had dispatched the two opponents before him (In large open tournaments like these, you always play people on the same score as you except in very rare cases (usually either winning or losing all your games.)) Our first moves were the same as they were in my first round, but I noticed it and played the right move this time. I actually debated whether I should play the same move as I did in the first game, as I actually enjoyed those positions quite a lot; however, I decided to play the "right" move this time. The "right" move was the one that I had prepared for, but it led into lots of complications and by move 12, I was in a worse position. To make matters worse, it looked to be significantly worse-- I couldn't see any moves at all that would give me a relatively equal game. The clock ticked down. I had about 1 hour and 10 minutes by now, and by the time I finished thinking I had half an hour left. Eventually I saw the one move that would give me a relatively equal game-- and best of all, it set a nasty trap if my opponent played the obvious move. My opponent played the obvious move and I set up a checkmating trap. He was a good sport and he played it out to checkmate. This was probably my favorite game of the entire tournament. This ended the first day of the tournament.

The next day didn't go so well. In the fourth round I was black against a teenager, which didn't inspire confidence. I made a blunder in the opening and the rest of the game were my futile attempts to swindle.

In the fifth round I was white against a younger kid. This game was closer, at least. I had a better position at one point but I made a bad trade into an equal position and I eventually lost. This ended the second day of the tournament.

In the 6th round I was black against a teenager. I played a slightly dubious opening and got an even position. I made a mistake and got a worse position, but then he blundered into a perpetual check and it was a draw. (A perpetual check is where one side keeps checking the other and there is no way for the checked side to escape without worsening their position; in this game I was in a worse position but I could keep checking him as long as I wanted. I had no intention of stopping, of course, because that would mean I would probably lose.)



In the 7th round I was black against a little girl. At this point I knew I wasn't going to win any prizes, because my score was still low, but I sure didn't want to be beaten by a little girl. Besides, if I won I would have 2 more wins than losses, and that would be a fairly solid result.

The final game of the tournament was relatively anti-climactic; she played the same variation that my opponent in round 2 played and lost a pawn on move 5. From here I won some more material and stampeded my opponent with an armada of pawns, resulting in a quick, easy victory.

I ended up getting 24th out of a field of 125 and a score of 4.5/7, which is pretty good.

SW
The Family Times
12/25/23

Style Watch

The Tale of Ehud and Eglon

By Junior Poet, Bard Alexander

Once upon a time the King of Moab had thought
That he would take Israel and so he sought
To capture it then and all right there
So that thing he did, and did he dare

And now for the King, himself I'll describe
Who took all of Israel, yes every tribe.
He was clumsy and fat,
and proud of that,
quite nicely rounded,
and his belly abounded.
And now for his name, which was Eglon by birth,
who had accomplished his aim, and then he had mirth

Now Ehud, a Benjamite, a man lefthanded,
had a present for Eglon, and went up and handed
the present to him, and sent away
his companions, who no clue had they,
That Ehud had hid a sword in his shirt,
Who then stabbed fat Eglon, and out came the dirt.

The End

(Well, did I at least do as well as Dr. Suess?)

Dressing Up

By Abigail

For holowing I was a American girl. Alexander was a ninja and Attalia was a princess pooh bear. There was snow too. It melted then snowed, then it melted then snowed, etc. Was had verses tea time because we were doing Bible bee. We got a lot of treats. The end

Saffron Style

Spouses Still Sweethearts

Coolness Defined

Sweet and Silly

Abigail and Grandma Mary both got Cowgirl Boots in 2023

Ta
The Family Times
12/25/23

Tabloids

War Tortoises

By Alexander

War tortoises are the noblest of creatures. Although they are exclusively found in Torswin, (there rarely found outside of Temblan) they are without a doubt the most strong, heavy and hungry mounts. War tortoises form a natural bond with their owner. They love to feed on *Venus Frogus* (a strange carnivorous plant) which are mainly found in the country of Temblan in the continent of Aera. They are omnivorous, eating anything in sight, not just *Venus Frogus* or other plants. Shrimp, lobster and seafood are the primary cuisine for the beach dwelling tortoises, but countryside tortoises will feed on hunting game, foxes, squirrels, wild boar, etc.

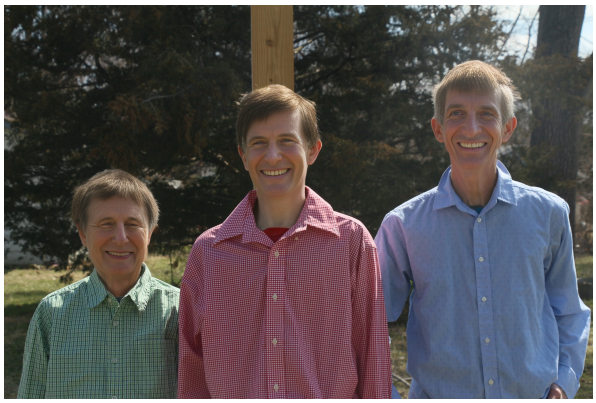
These reptilian giants grow to about 4-5 feet tall, around 4 feet wide and 5-6 feet long, with an average weight of 2000-2100 lb.

War tortoises are mainly used in great battles, where their strength and brute force becomes necessary and quite convenient. These humongous reptiles usually take one or two riders, but even four may be possible on a rather large tortoise. Armored knights with swords are usually the riders, but a few archers are also selected. Tortoise knights ride tortoises at speeds of 15-30 mph.

War tortoises are perfect for transportation, as they can swim across the ocean along-side a ship, and blow through foliage in rough country. However, riding them is not easy. At times it will feel like riding a 6-foot leaping jack-rabbit, which is half true. The requirements for becoming an royal Temblan War tortoise knight is not throw up or be dismounted for the duration of:

1. A ride through a forest
2. A ride up a mountain
3. A swim through a lake on the lake's floor

War tortoise saddles are quite necessary if you wish to stay on one in full battle speed. You can ride bare-back on a nice, slow countryside ride, but charging through the enemy lines is a different matter. The most common used saddle was invented by Gumpers Gloop, a devout citizen of Temblan. It consists of a carved wooden base, chained around the tortoise with three chains coated in hard leather on both sides. Then a large saddle which straps the rider in is bolted with three large bolts to the wooden base.



The Rugg Boys discovered a stable diffusion time machine and met up with their future selves.

Ta2
The Family Times
12/25/23

Tabloids

The New Class of Organisms

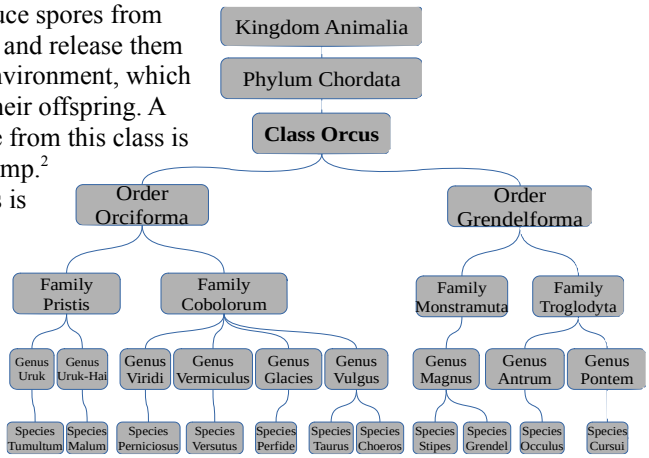
Astonishing new findings in Kingdom Animalia

By Andrew Rugg

In time past many people have told legends of famed creatures such as the Orcs, Goblins, Trolls, and Ogres, and the tales are so abundant that the question begs: Where did these legends come from?

Most would say that these tales were made by wild imaginations, or exaggerated stories of lesser creatures,[1] but now, thanks to great biological work by the scientists of our time, we have discovered the true answer to the question, and that is that there ***are*** these creatures.

Yes! A new class of species, however small, has been located in Kingdom Animalia's most notable phylum (Chordata) containing some of these mythical creatures. Obviously, much more research and extravagant findings are on their way, and it will soon become such a notable subject that all biological textbooks in high school, medium school, and even *lower* school will need to create a section concerning it in order to keep their status"up-to-date". We shall work our way through the new class (Class Orcus) and explain the differences and characteristics of each creature in turn. A chart of Class Orcus is shown below. Creatures of this class are only male, and to reproduce, they produce spores from their skin, and release them into the environment, which produce their offspring. A young one from this class is called an imp.[2]



Orcus is found in Kingdom Animalia, Phylum Chordata. The class is divided up into two orders, which are each divided up into two families. Order Orciforma contains those in the form of orcs, namely, the orcs themselves and the goblins. The orcs are put into family Pristis, and the goblins in family Cobolorum. The organisms contained in order Orciforma are also far more intelligent than those in Grendelforma, and even have the capacity to understand and speak language to some extent. In family Pristis we can see the two different types of orcs: The Uruks and the Uruk-Hai, derived from the Elvish Uruk (meaning orc) and Hai, meaning death, thereby implying that the Uruk-Hai are "Uruks to end all Uruks" or "Uruk bringers of death." The Uruk Genus contains orcs that are less muscular, tall, and have no hair, whereas Uruk-hai are far more muscular and tall

Family Cobolorum contains the most species in Order Orcus, and also the greatest diversity. It is split into four genuses, namely: *Virdi* (Normal goblins), V*emiculus* (Hobgoblins), *Glacies* (The most rare: ice goblins), and *Vulgus* (The Moblins). Vulgus is the only one with more than one species. Normal goblins (Genus *Viridi)* live in groups (called slaughters) which are quite deadly when gathered together. The goblins, especially the ones from genus *Viridi*, are by far more intelligent the Orcs. Hobgoblins are more muscular and less bent over than regular goblins, who tend to be far more wiry and hunched. They also tend to have more of a crimson shade as apposed to the greener color of the common *Virdi perniciosus.* Ice goblins are, as stated before, by far the most rare of the species of Cobolorum. As their name implies, they are azure in color, and fond of extremely icy habitats. They have a lifestyle similar to the common *V. perniciosus*, but their walk is slow and sluggish, due to the effects of the extreme cold of the areas they live in.

Finally for family Cobolorum, there are the Moblins, contained in genus Vulgus. At first glance, the two species of Moblins (Taurus and Choeros) hardly seem to have anything in common, but after careful examination it can be shown that the only difference lies in their fat to muscle ratio in different areas of their body, how their shape differs as they mature, and the fact that *V. taurus* are more fond of weapons such as throwing spears, whereas *V. choeros* prefer the club or similar staffs. They are more intelligent than other goblins in some ways, as other goblins require help to build any sort of defensible structure, and Moblins can do it on their own, but, in other respects, even a whole slaughter of Moblins working together cannot utter a single intelligible word, other than a few reported instances of "It's a secret to everybody", or, on one occasion: I'm hungry.[3]

Now, moving on from Order Orciforma, we find the interesting Order Grendelforma, which contains the bizarre beings classified as trolls and ogres. Ogres are contained in family Monstramuta, where as trolls are found in family Troglodyta. Ogres can have as many as 7 heads, each brain operating similar to the two halves of our human brains. The number of heads seems to be somewhat random and non-genetical, produced by different pre-birth factors. It should be noted however, that ogres from species *stipes* are far more likely to have one head, in comparison to those in species *grendel*.

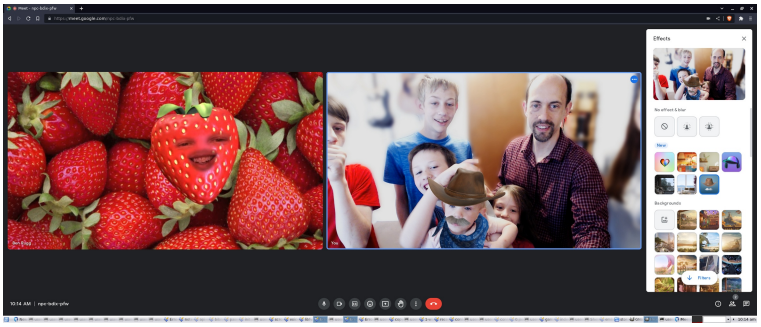
Trolls, in family Troglodyta, usually have one head, although occasionally two or three. The two geneses of trolls are differentiated mainly by the makeup of their greyhame glands, the glands which produce the spores that create the offspring.[4] The greyhame glands of the *P. cursui* (bridge trolls) are brutally simple, and simply release spores, doing nothing else, but the greyhame glands of cave trolls also secret a coating which covers their skin, lubricating it and allowing the troll's skin and muscles (which are actually made of a mineral very similar to stone) to have flexibility. However, this coating dissipates in direct sunlight, and leaves the troll helpless and frozen permanently. Although some strains of cave trolls have gained a more resistant coating, most cave trolls tend to live in caves, hence their name.

Bridge trolls can survive in direct sunlight due to the fact that their coating is created by their sweat glands and generated from the items which they consume, optimally metals such as gold coins, which protects their skin most efficiently.

1 For some examples, see *This* is *a Scientific Paper* by Clive T. Stapler, and *A Made Up Study* by Louis T. Stapled.
2 There is also another creature that sometimes appears in a duck-like form named an imp, but the term in that case does not apply to the young of it's kind, but instead the animal itself. For information about these also extremely bizarre creatures see *Imps: an A-Z explanation* by Gen. Celes Chere.
3 See *Ganon and his armies* by Link Nintendo.
4 For a more detailed explanation, see *How I saved the dwarves from being eaten* by Gandalf Greyhame.

Ta3
The Family Times
12/25/23

Tabloids



Uncle Ben Transforms into a Giant Strawberry

By Aaron

It was a bright Thursday morning when Benjamin Rugg discovered that he had eaten one too many strawberries. His relations watched in horror as arms, legs, head, and body began to change into the form of a strawberry. As if that wasn't enough, massive strawberries began to grow all around him, cutting off his escape and trapping him in a wall of strawberries.

At this point his niece, Attalia Rugg, magically transformed into a cowboy and rushed to his aid, blasting down the strawberries and rescuing him from their evil clutches. She then returned him to his normal form by administering a triple overdose of blueberries. Thus ended the saga of Benjamin and the strawberries.

P.S. Some people have claimed that this was actually nothing but a Google filter.

Abigail the Mummy

By Abigail

We had a history project and I had to make a mummy with my doll and toilet paper and Alexander had to make a mummy out of me he should have made my legs separate but he dint he took a low mode video of me getting out. The end.

---Time Travel---

(AKA My History Project Report Turned Fantasy Fiction)

By Alexander

I put the finishing touches on my time machine. There, perfect. I climbed in. All panels, propellers, solar panels, wings, and vortex stabilizers were fixed. Now I was off to Ancient Egypt! I put in my signature and my fingerprint scan.

Whrrrrrrrrrrrrrr

Whrrrrrrrrrrrrrr

Whrrrrrrrrrrrrrr

<pow!><static><pow!>

Suddenly I was flying through the air in the middle of a sandy dune. Then I looked forward. The Sphinx, the largest monolith in the world. It was huge! 65 feet wide and 421 feet long. King Khufu's family designed. I snapped back to reality. I was flying into the Sphinx! I made an attempt to turn, but it was too late. I crashed into it, breaking it's beard and nose. The time machine fell to the ground. I checked it to make sure it wasn't hurt. But what concerned me more was the Sphinx. *Oh well.* I thought. I quickly left it there and began to explore. I found King Khufu's pyramid, the last of the seven ancient wonders. Besides my adventure with the Sphinx, I also mummified the Egyptian queen: Haar pa se vreugde.*

After I went home in the time machine, I looked at pictures to find that the Sphinx beard a nose I crashed into were still broken.

*Her Father's Joy in Afrikaans

Tc
The Family Times
12/25/23

Technology

Game Server

By Aaron

This year Dad had the idea to take his old Nintendo game cartridges and make them playable on a computer. So we bought a device that could take a game cartridge and copy off the data. Sometimes this took a while and we had to try to make it work by doing things like cleaning it with alcohol, wiggling it back and forth, pushing down on the cartridge while the game was copying off, etc. etc. Then we were able to put them on our computers and play them on special emulators. After we installed the games, Dad found a web-based emulator and we were able to put them on a website and play them on there. The best part about it was that the rest of the aunts and uncles could play too! Also, this emulator allows you to save your game at any point, and it also allows you to rewind the game if you made a mistake.

New Smile

By Andrew

Well, a couple years ago, back in China, I broke my tooth after I fell face first on the tile floor. As you can imagine, like many other things in China, their dentistry ranges from non-existent to really bad, so we didn't want to get my tooth fixed there. This year we decided to get my tooth fixed at a newer dentist in town. They were really nice! My dentist's favorite color was red, like me, and she was born in Croatia, so we had being overseas for part of our childhood in common too. Everything seemed right about my tooth, the nerve had receded so that it wasn't damaged, and she was able to put on another filling to make a fake tooth end to replace the part that was broken off easily, without needing a crown or anything.

Birds vs Squirrels

By Alexander

Last year we went to the Klehm arboretum where there were tons of Lego exhibits, one of which was a fence post with a bird feeder with birds and squirrels around it. It was then that Dad and Grandpa Jeff though of a cool idea for a game, where one person was a bird, and the other a squirrel, and they would try to get more food out of the bird-feeder than the other. We eventually made it for Grandpa Jeff's birthday using a physics engine called Rapier.

Anna with a week's worth of groceries.

"Yep, you're ready for the apocalypse!"
– Cashier at Aldi

Te
The Family Times
12/25/23

The Everyday

Bible Bee Local Meetings

By Aaron

This year we were doing BB again, and Mom and Dad signed up to be a host again. Now in the SS you have to study your DJ, your SP (and RA for the SP) and memorize 15 MPs. We had a host group meeting every month, and we would go over a unit of the DJ, Dad would talk about a chapter (or portion of a chapter) of the SP, and some people would recite their MPs. Mom would make snacks and stuff for the group.

At the end of the SS is PD. In PD you have to take a test based on the DJ and the MPs, but this test is really easy. You also have to recite 2 of your MPs in front of a judge. Then we had to take the QT.

The QT was hard. It had very little DJ content and too much CR content, CR context, MP context, and RA. It also had some HWs that were never talked about in the DJ. Everyone thought the QT was hard, but fortunately we all qualified and got to go to Nats.

Bible Bee Social Forum Lingo
(So you can ~~talk~~ type like the cool kids too.)
BB-Bible Bee
CR-Cross Reference
DJ-Discovery Journal
HW-Hebrew Words
MP-Memory Passage
Nats-Nationals
PD-Proclaim Day
QT-Qualifying Test
RA-Random Access
SS-Summer Study

How We Found Calico

By Abigail

Well it happened one day when we were doing stretches. well it was a fine day but little did we know that it was going to be a finer day. Then we saw a beautiful thing it was a calico cat! It stuck as close as cats and dogs but when we gave her tuna she loved us . We keep her in the Garage. We might have, to give her away, but for now she is our cat. The End.

Returning Calico

By Abigail

On June 15 we found a cat and we named her Calico at first we dinit know if we were going to keep her but later it seemed like this was her for ever home. The day after thanksgiving she ran a way and I will tell you later were she went. After 8 days on a Sunday we got her back. On wensday we were out picking up trash and I had ran up ahead and then I saw something let me tell you were the cat went when she ran away, well when she ran away she went to some one we didit know she knew well, a 5 year old girl's aunt gave her Calico when she was just a kitten and she ran away from them and then we found her and them she ran away from us and went back to them then she ran away from them and we got her but then we saw a poster for her we were sad but that night we had to give her back we are sad and I always will be sad when I think of her. The end.

To
The Family Times
12/25/23

Town & Country

Civil War Days

By Alexander

This year we went to Civil War days with Grandma Sharla and Grandpa John. We went to the artillery station. The captain showed us different types of cannon balls and the cannon, and then we went to be drilled with (pretend) rifles. Then we went to Mary Todd Lincoln's speech. She talked about Mr. Lincoln, and her kids, and she had a hoop-skirt. We also went to other places, such as the Mallory Brown House, Water Mill, etc. I bought a toy plane from the gift shop, but I lost some of the parts in the car, but later found them.

Illinois Snow Sculpting Competition

By Alexander

Well, when we went to go to the snow sculpting competition held in Rockford with Grandma Sharla and Grandpa John, there were two competitions. There was a statewide competition, and high school division.

The first place for the State competition was a whale: "Don't take the bait". But our family's favorite for that division was The Band of Misfit Boys - "Web Design" with a spider using a computer. They won 2nd place.

My favorite for the high school competition was the bowler bear, made by a Christian high school team, and they won 2nd place.

Elliot House in Montgomery

By Abigail

After Grandma Rugg's birthday party we went to visit the oldest house in Montgomery. It was made out of wood and there was a old stove. the floor was stone there was little cracks on the ceiling with sunshine shining though them it had holes for windows. The stove was very black the Handel could still open but the house was very old. It only had one room.

William T. Elliot built his cabin and blacksmith shop in 1834

Tn
The Family Times
12/25/23

Transportation

Tanks

By Aaron

When we went on a sleepover with our grandparents this year they took us to Cantigny, a war museum. When we entered the building we saw a miniature replica of the park underneath the glass floor. Before looking at any of the exhibits, we went outside to look at the tanks. There were a lot of tanks from as early as World War I up to modern times, and we were allowed to climb on them. The heaviest tank weighed 141 tons, and was the most modern tank. That was probably the most fun part.

After we finished climbing, we went inside to look at the exhibits. There was an exhibit of different soldier knives and of different guns, and there were also bigger exhibits like one of the beach on D-Day and the jungles in Vietnam. That was interesting too. After that, we went to Culver's and then went home.

Uncle Ben's Drone

By Andrew

Once, Uncle Ben came to visit us, and he brought his drone with him. It folded into a pretty small bag, but it was really big when it folded out. We went over to a nearby park and launched it. It was able to go really high. We even found McDonald's, and used the drone to check the price of gas. We then walked home, (because it was going to rain) flying it toward us as we walked. It took some time for us to land it, and Uncle Ben clipped a twig off of a tree by accident.

My Plane

By Alexander

My name is commander Alexander of the Hillbilly air force, and just yesterday met my first (and last) combat. I had just purchased a plane called the Sopwith Camel F.1 from the CWD (Crash Waddle Dump) and set out to meet a squadron of Japanese fighters at 1 o'clock, right after lunch. After we got that flying, we met with them around 2 and began to attack. I suddenly realized that there was no supports for my second wing, so I had nothing above me. And, as soon as I shot at the Japanese zero, my propeller exploded into a million pieces, given that my gun was right behind the propeller. As I plummeted down, I tried to put out the landing gear and wings, but there wasn't any. In fact, looking at it later, the picture on the box wasn't even my plane! And to start it up, we had to carry it to the side of the cliff so that the propeller would break hitting the ground! Oh, what a price to pay for visiting the gift shop!
(I landed in a lake and swam to shore, but my plane sunk to the bottom, and with it $19 dollars.)*

*This story is totally fabricated. And later we found the landing gear I lost in the car. But thanks for reading. – Alexander

T
The Family Times
12/25/23

Travel

Mt. Rushmore

By Andrew

On our way to Yellowstone, we stopped at Mt. Rushmore. Some say it's anticlimactic, but it was actually pretty awesome. The faces were HUGE. We even got to walk down a trail that led right under George Washington's nose, and really close to all the others too. Of course it would have been cooler if they had finished it, but it was amazing all the same, and on the trail, as you passed a president, there would be a billboard with lots of information about him. It was a good visit!

Crazy Horse

By Andrew Rugg

You may or may not have heard of Crazy Horse Monument before. Some reviews rate this sculpture of a Native American chief higher than Mt. Rushmore, due to it's enormous size, and probably today's society's great interest for Native American things. Nevertheless, it is kind of disappointing. The view that you have to pay to get isn't much better than the view from the highway, and it's not very impressive yet since it's not finished. To get what might be a better view, after the entry fee, you can pay more to get a bus farther in. If you really want to dig out your wallet, you can pay to get right up to Crazy Horse's face, but it's not cheap per person either. Overall, I enjoyed the great heroes at Mount Rushmore far more.

Devil's Tower

By Aaron

On our trip to Yellowstone we decided to stop and go to other sites on the way. One of these was Devil's Tower. The tower was impressive, but the part we liked best was the boulder scramble. Rocks fell down from Devil's tower and landed on around the tower, and we were allowed to climb up them.

First me and Dad and Alexander went up, and then Andrew went up and I went down to help Abigail do the boulder scramble. She didn't complain too much going up.

Going down, however, she got scared and we took a longer time. We all made it safely down though.

Many prairie dogs were seen at Devil's Tower. Rugg boys headed their Uncle's warning and none were bit.

Tp
The Family Times
12/25/23

Trip

Bible Bee Nationals Trip

By Abigail

It took two days to get there. We had to stay at a hotel, and they gave us free breakfast which we liked a lot. After we arrived at Bible Bee, I went to the game room and I made two friends named Joy ,and Ester I think I saw them each one more time. I got along rather well with the Alfonsos. Autumn {a junior} is my pen pal. We had a day where participants had a special game time and we mostly practiced passages. The next day we did our Oral Recitations before the judges. I was shaking but I recited a lot of passages. We were kind of disappointed that none of us advanced to semi-finals, the brothers especially. But then we had more time to play in the game room. The last night after we watched Senior Finals there was a square dance where Alexander was my partner. And before we left we went to Tennessee to visit our friends.

Grandma Lorna's 90th Birthday and Family Reunion

By Andrew

We went to Great Grandma Lorna's house in the center of the universe for her 90th birthday and a Sellin Family Reunion. We picked up Pizza with Uncle Nathaniel and Aunt Mary the day before, and they gave all the kids a bag of free cookies along with it, although they ended up being more like crackers than cookies. The night before, we got to sleep in her basement, which still had a lot of stuff from when Grandma Sharla was a kid.
We also went to Marathon Park that day. We usually go to Pizza ranch for her birthday parties, but this year, we went to Wausau on water, and we had a lot of fun learning to skip stones on the river. We love you Grandma Lorna and are all so glad you were born! Happy 90th birthday!

W
The Family Times
12/25/23

Weather

The Snow Forts

By Andrew Rugg

In the beginning of the year we made snow 2 gigantic snow forts. Now, the traditional way is to pile up a bunch of snow into a wall, but surprisingly this is neither the easiest, nor the most practical way to make a good and useful snow fort. Now, if you have a gigantic driveway you can pile up the snow from that on either side of it, but if you don't have a really big driveway, (or you don't have a lot of snow on your driveway) that doesn't really work that well either.

There are two ways to make a really good snow fort.

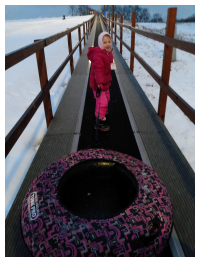
#1: You roll giant snowballs and stick them next to each other to make a wall. Then you can also roll snow disks and place those on top of the snowballs for battlements. Now, the snowballs will not be able to make a complete wall, and there will be space left between the two undersides of the snowballs, but you can use this space to your advantage. If you make a small wall the traditional way covering the space, (but not taking up that space) you can then use that space as a "snowball cave" for extra hidden storage. Me and Abigail used this method to create the fort we called Fort Yorktown.

#2: If you take a rectangular recycling bin and fill it with hard packed snow, it will mold the snow into a brick. You then can simply repeat this process until you have a wall of bricks. While you do get a much cooler looking fort, and about the same defense level as the other method, this method does take longer, and you lose the ability to make a snowball cave. Alexander & Aaron used this method to create Fort Castille.

After the creation of these forts, which did take a while, we commenced battle. Mostly I fought with Abigail in Fort Yorktown against Aaron who fought with Alexander at Fort Castille. Once, I went with Alexander at Fort Castille against Aaron at Yorktown, but he had a great advantage, because I accidentally left a million snowballs in Yorktown's snowball caves.❄

Tyrol Basin

By Aaron

For Christmas 2022 the aunts and uncles gave us a trip to Tyrol Basin to do snow tubing. We arrived at 4:30 and started snow tubing. When we first arrived, it was still snowing, and most of the lanes weren't very good. We actually got stuck on one of the lanes and had to walk back up. The second one was the fastest, and it kept getting faster as it got later and later. They had a conveyor belt to take you back up the hill, which was better than walking, but it went really slowly.

Eventually, we saw a big group of people lashing their tubes together and getting farther down the hill. We decided to try to beat them, so after a few attempts we got farther than they did. But as it got later and later the tubes started going farther and farther, and somebody beat our record, so we had to try again. We made it, and then signed "Rugg" in the snow. On our last attempt, we put our tubes in a line, and then hooked our feet into the next person's tube so that we made a straight line. Dad was at the back and started pushing us down the hill. That one was the farthest. Then we went back to the car and got Subway.❄